God's Mercies with Love

June 15, 1947

GOD,,S WONDERS IN THE DARK.

Ps.88:12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?"

No writing in the whole Bible is so packed with sorrow and sadness as is the 88th Psalm. It starts with a cry, thruout it hurls its waves of lamentation unrelentingly, and it ends with desolation. While these waters of grief are engulfing him, the author asks some deep questions-

Oh, Lord, why casteth thou off my soul?
Wilt thou show thy wonders to the dead?
Shall they that are dead arie and praise thee?
Shall thy Lovingkindness be declared in the grave,
or thy Faithfulness in destruction?

And then, as tho adding all these questions into one, the Psalmist demands further,

Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?

We can excuse the Psalmist, perhaps, for his un-christian attitude because in his day there was no Christ, and yet, as Xns, we would be cowardly not to dare to hold up the psalmist's problems in the revealing light of God's love as expressed in Jesus Christ. For our text and theme let us take the ?,

Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?

I. God's wonders do shime forth in the dark of human ignorance.

Today, we do not boast of our ignorance but of our knowledge. Man has indeed achieveed much. Great deeds have been performed, mighty victories won, wonderful progress made, seemingly unrealizable vsions have come true. Justly does man think himself as the super-being of all creatures.

And yet, afterall, what man knows is but an infinitesimal part of what he does not know. And those who know the most, our great leaders of thot and achievement, readily acknowledge the littleness of what we know.

Now think your way back to the time when man was not yet created, when no living creature inhabited the earth, when the earth itself was yet unformed, when there was no world, no order, no life, when all was chaos and black night filled all the universe.

Within that awful darkness was God, thinking and planning until there came forth the infinite world-order, the universal light and law and substance. Now dont you suppose that if in that utter darkness God was the great Infinite Thinker and director of creative thot, surely in our own realm of human ignorance God, the Thinker, also rules supreme?

The farther man penetrates into the mystery of matter the more amazing matter becomes. Discovery is but the process of unveiling the thot of the Almighty as expressed in the various processes of creation. And to think that these vast storehouses of Knowledge have always been there, long before we knew anything about them! God's wonders ever waiting ready to dispel man's ignorance.

Now the peculiar thing about man's knowledge is this- a man makes his discoveries, thinks out his theory, forms his opinions, then, thinking that he has reached the end of Understanding, he rests from his mental labors, grows old and dies. Each generation, consequently, thinks that it has reached th end of life, and looks upon the coming generation as on the decline. The Golden Age is in the past. Our children cannot compare with us when we were young! They are inferior mentally and weaker morally.

But we are not at the end of things. We have just begun! God is just beginning to reveal his wonders to his children of this earth. Creation is anything but Binished. Yes, back of our human ignorance and limited understanding is God who continues to lead humanity out darkness into the light of His Truth.

God's wonders are manifest also in the darkness of human misunderstandings!

One of the severest tragedies of life is the terrible gulf of misunderstanding which separates good men from each other.

It has always been a puzzle to me how our most able, honest and public-spirited men become relentless enemies. Great servants of God have waged implacable warfare against heach other. Ecclesiastical history is full of graveyards piled high with theological skskulls. The fires of martyrdom have swept humanity as furiously and destructively as do our forest fires lay waste our lands.

It is the same in other walks of life. Supposedly broadminded scientists arraign themselves in opposing schools of interpretation and throw stones at each other. Each set in his own understanding of things condemning all others who differ.

We look upon our great statesmen as heroes and we worship them. One of our greatest, George Washington, was no hero, however, in the eyes of John Adams, for these two were political enemies. Likewise with Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton it was a case of holding each other in contempt. Our present day political leaders continue to fight each other just as bitterly.

In business and society likewise, misunderstandings create enmities and breed strife.

Now here is the great fact to be noted in connection with human misunderstandings. Just as we find God in the utter darkness of igmorance, we find him in the darkness of our misunderstandings. Who will deny that God used Washington and Adams and Jefferson and Hamilton in the founding and shaping of our country? God is there working in wisdom and love to bring about his own ends. God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all! Men are being used by God to bring about a better world-order for humanity.

A field of bloom in Spring invaded by a swarm of bees, busy gathering honey. But they are also scattering the pollen which will result in more bloom next season. Did you ever think of humanity as a buzzing hive of human bees? We are busy making use of this world, gathering our honey for ourselves, but at the same time something bigger than this world is using us for still greater ends.

"There's a feel of all things flowing,
And no power of earth can bind them;
There's a sense of all things growing,
And thru all their forms a glowing
Of the shaping Soul behind them.

" In the stone a dream is sleeping,
Just a tinge of life, a tremor;
In the tree a soul is creeping-
Last, a rush of angels sweeping
With the skies beyond the dreamer.

"So the Lord of Life is flinging
Out a splendor that conceals Him:
And the God is softly singing
And on secret ways is winging,
Till the rush of song reveals him.

III. Likewise we find God as manifestly present in the dark of our sufferings and sorrows.

I heard Dr.Gordon endeavor to answer the question, "Why does God permit earthquakes and calamities?" He pointed out that 99% of our sufferings are not God s fault, but our own; that this universe is controlled by law; that everything, including humanity, is subject to change; and that without struggle man could make no progress.

Then Dr.Gordon came out with the statement that God is preparing us for better things, for a higher life, that He has a Plan, and that in the realization of His plan our sufferings are not to be compared with the glories that shall be ours then.

It seemed to me that perhaps here we find our best answer to his question. Apparently, there is so much waste, so much unfulfilled good, so much inhumanity, so much meaningless suffering in the world as to fall far short of a justification of our mere existance as creatures upon the earth. To suffer as we do just for the sake of living our earthly lives seems to me an infinite foolishness and infinite cruelty, branding the Creator anything but a God of love and goodness.

I believe that in Jesus Christ we find the only justifiable basis for human suffering. The great purpose of His life, to lift humanity up into the true sonship of God, to make us so god-like here that we shall be fitted to live with God hereafter, to make earth so like heaven that when we get to heaven we shall feel much at home.

We can see how the sufferings of Jesus Christ are vitally related to His great purpose as Savior of the world. In just the same way God is using our sufferings for the Christianizing our souls.

Since God is in and thru creation we have a right to conclude that God is suffering with us that He may also share with us the glories which He has prepared for us.

Recently, after Frederick Shannon had preached in a little town in N.Y.State, a sorely afflicted soul slipped the following lines into his han With these lines I will close.

"This moving house that you call me,
Is growing old, and I can see
That it is weak, and here and there
I find some things beyond repair.
You err, in thinking ~~that~~ it is me,
For I am what you cannot see.
Within I tread the well-worn floor,
Or stand beside my prison door
That outward swung in days of yore.
'Tis useless now, it swings no more.
Without my house, I see nor hear
Some things that once to me were dear,
And o'er my roof the chilly flow
Of Winter piles its drifts of snow.
Yet all within is still aglow
With earnest life, and everything
Wears on its face the joys of Spring."